The Winnebago Indian Mission

of the Reformed Church in the United States

located at

BLACK RIVER FALLS AND NEILLSVILLE, WIS.

BY REV. THEODORE P. BOLLIGER, D.D.

MORNING CONGREGATION, AUG. 13, 1922

OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY

The Mission was begun in 1878 by Rev. Jacob Hauser. He served until 1885. Since that date Rev. Jacob Stucki has been in charge.

The forty-four years of the mission may be divided into three periods.

The Period of Hope—1878-1898. From the founding of the Mission to the baptism of the first convert. During this period a day school for the children was regularly conducted and preaching services were held as often as the services of a suitable interpreter

could be obtained; for only a few of the Winnebagoes could speak English. Rev. Hauser taught, preached, visited the Indians in their wigwams and shacks, and diligently studied the difficult Winnebago language. He reduced the language to writing, compiled a dictionary of 1500 words and began a grammar. Rev. Jacob Stucki continued the mission along the lines laid down by his predecessor.

The Winnebagoes for sixty years had been so mercilessly oppressed, cheated and robbed by the White Man that they were unwilling to listen to the White Man's religion. By means of thirteen treaties not one of which was kept by the White Man, the Winnebagoes had been deprived of their lands in Wisconsin, the purchase price was held "in trust" by the government, and the interest promised them annually was withheld from all those who refused to live on the reservation in Nebraska. The children were willingly sent to the school; but the old folks declared: The Indian religion is better than the White Man's.

The Period of Harvest—1898-1917. From the baptism of the first convert to the opening of the Boarding School. David Decorah, King of Thunder, John Stacy and wife were the first converts. From year to year the number increased until a congregation of 66 souls has been gathered. These Indian Christians have made a good record. Not one has been a backslider. Not one has been guilty of a crime. No one has disgraced the name of Christ. All the men are willing and able to pray at the services. In addition to the baptized ones there have been many timid adherents who shrank from publicly breaking away from their relatives and friends, but nevertheless by their attendance and interest gave evidence that God's Spirit was working in their lives. The influence of the Mission has reached practically every Winnebago family in Wisconsin and a very marked change in their behaviour has resulted.

As the Christian life and faith can grow strong and beautiful only as they are directed and nourished by the Word of God, Rev. Stucki labored for years to translate parts of the Bible into the Winnebago tongue. John Stacy rendered invaluable aid in completing this task. The four Gospels, Acts, Genesis, and Exodus 19, 20 were translated. The American Bible Society published the Winnebago Scripture in 1907.

The Period of the Boarding School—Since 1917. From the opening of the Boarding School until now. When the day school was begun in 1878, several hundred Winnebagoes lived within walking distance of the school. As land values increased in Wisconsin many square miles formerly counted as of little account were bought up and fenced in for pasture. This forced the Indians to scatter and find new locations. At present they are living in small or larger groups throughout six counties. A Boarding School therefore became an absolute necessity. In the summer of 1917 modest accommodations were prepared for housing and feeding about 25. From the beginning applicants had to be turned away. The space intended for 25 had to serve for as many as 42. The crowding became dangerous to the health of the children. Two epidemics of influenza swept through the school. There was no room for the

children to read or study and no place within doors where they could amuse themselves.

The demand for larger quarters could no longer be resisted, and hence in 1920, the new building at Neillsville was begun. It is located 25 miles from the old mission. A modern building was erected, providing home and school facilities for about 75 children and the necessary working staff. At the opening of the school in September, 1921, the building was filled and about 40 applications had to be refused for lack of room. The building stands on a 33½ acre farm beautifully located along the Black River. The home of the superintendent and the manual training building are near the main building. The buildings with their equipment and the farm represent an investment of about $80,000.

Between 1878 and 1922 a total of 472 individuals has been enrolled. About 300 remained long enough to learn to read, write and figure a little. Of these three score passed through six grades or more, five entered the High School, and three have had some college work.

AIMS OF THE SCHOOL

First. To educate the head. The course of study includes the work done in the eight grades of the public schools. Those who take the full work are prepared to enter the High School.

Second. To educate the hand. The Winnebagoes with few exceptions must earn their living by the work of their hands; hence, manual training receives much attention. The girls are taught to patch, darn and sew; as well as to perform the usual household duties in the kitchen, dining room, and laundry. The boys also have their tasks in the household and on the farm. They help with the chores and the work of the farm and garden. An elementary course in carpentry has also been added.

Third. To educate the heart. Superintendent Benj. Stucki says: "To lead these children to know Jesus and to accept him as their Saviour is the main spring of all the efforts of the school. All other aims are considered subservient to this. We recognize that without Christianity all efforts toward bettering the temporal welfare of these Indians can be only in a small measure successful. For these reasons, the religious training has been prosecuted with special diligence in Sunday School, devotions, daily Bible classes, song services and catechetical instructions."

CONCLUSION

The education of the Indian without Christianity is a failure. Only a Christian training can bring enduring benefit to the American Indian.

A PRAYER

"O Christ our Lord, Thou Shepherd of the Indians, Thou Friend of the little red children, show Thyself to the Winnebago tribe. Subdue many hearts; shed divine peace into many lives; reveal the joy of Thy salvation to many souls. To Thee we consecrate this work. Amen.

LITTLE PICTURES OF SCHOOL LIFE
1921-1922

On the opening day before the pupils were allowed the freedom of the building, they had to be scrubbed from head to foot. The head required special attention. It was washed with coal oil to rid it of vermin. Sometimes the battle against the cooties requires the application of all the known formulas before the victory is won.

Skin diseases, such as rash, itch, scabs and eczema are common. After the pupils are clean, these are attacked. One of the regular daily duties of the workers in charge is to attend to the many sores, bruises and wounds which the youngsters manage to get. Toothaches demand the right of way at all hours of the day or night.

Ninety per cent of the children enrolled come from heathen homes and yet all of them gladly learn the hymns, and Bible stories and verses. During the last school year forty-two of the choicest hymns were memorized and also scores of Bible verses.

When the county Sunday School convention was held in Neillsville last February, the Indian School was invited to give a forty minutes' program. They sang, recited, repeated Bible verses and gave their exercises. The interest of the audience reached its climax when one of the older girls repeated an entire chapter from memory instead of the usual Scripture reading. The school won many friends that day.

The smaller boys were taught how to mend, sew on buttons, darn stockings, make the beds and help about the building. This had a wholesome restraining influence upon them, impressing the lessons: Be careful; Keep things neat; Don't rip your clothes. Clothes do not seem to rip so often when the boys have to attempt the mending themselves.

One of the older girls who was not yet a professed Christian and whose parents are still heathen, wrote a little essay on the theme, "Why I am at the Winnebago Indian Mission School." This essay contained two remarkable sentences which are given here. "I was very anxious to come to school here because they teach us about the love of Christ and learn about our Lord so we may become good Christians and come unto Jesus when we die and live with him forever. I hope I may learn many things about our Lord, so when I go home I can tell my father and mother about the good things I learned about Jesus, and ask them to worship him always so they may become good Christians also."

Superintendent Benj. Stucki says: "The health of the children was exceptional. The Lord preserved us from epidemics and there was only one case of serious illness, a case of pneumonia. The average attendance for the entire year was 98 per cent. The per cent was never lower than 96 and for several months reached 100."

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May 21 was the most inspiring day of the entire school year. Three of the older boys and three girls after most careful instruction confessed their faith and were baptized. Of their own accord, without any urging, they had resolved to become Christians and unite with the Church. The Word and Spirit of God had worked the great decision. Rev. A. V. Casselman said of these young people: "They were the most earnest and serious-minded class I have ever seen. There was a look of knowing earnestness in the faces of these young Christians, as they answered the questions and confessed their faith, that was inspiring." All the parents of these converts are still heathen, and some of them with bitterness had tried to intimidate and prevent their children from becoming Christians. Though it meant hardships and suffering not one of them was turned back or even hesitated.

SCHOLARS AND MISSION WORKERS
CLOSING DAY, MAY, 1922

WAYS OF HELPING

Adopting a child. We invite organizations to "adopt a child" for a year and contribute $50 or more towards its support. The name and picture of the "adopted" child will be sent to the contributor, as well as other information, if desired.

Clothing and bedding. Clothing which is appropriate for the wigwams in the woods will not suit the conditions at Neillsville. The pagan Indians are generally very poor. Hence the friends of the Indians must supply the lack. Clothing, stockings, caps, shoes, bedding, blankets, towels, handkerchiefs, etc., are always welcome. Worn articles, if still in good condition, can be put to good use.

Little extras. Good, nourishing food is always furnished, but the children greatly appreciate "little extras." The good women

of the Church know this and numerous packages of cakes, cookies, candies, fruit, jelly, etc. are being sent. There is small danger that too many "goodies" will be received. Children's books, games, and toys are also gladly received.

All inquiries concerning the "adopting of a child," or the clothing, etc., needed at any particular time, or the "little extras" should be addressed to the *Superintendent Winnebago Indian School, Neillsville, Wis.*

WINNEBAGO INDIAN SCHOOL, NEILLSVILLE, WIS.
SHOWING THE EAST AND SOUTH FRONTS

INDIAN MISSION DAY

The Tri-Synodic Board of Home Missions, which conducts the home missionary operations within the boundaries of the Synod of the Northwest, the Central Synod and the former Synod of the Southwest, requested the synods last year (1921) to recommend the observance of the second Sunday in November as INDIAN MISSION DAY. The Synods unanimously endorsed the request.

The Tri-Synodic Board therefore calls upon pastors, congregations, and Sunday Schools to receive special offerings for the Winnebago Indian Mission on that day or some other suitable day. Let each congregation do something special for our Indians during November.

Congregations, societies and individuals desiring to make a special offering should send their *money gifts* directly to *Rev. Theodore P. Bolliger, 1918 West Lawn Ave., Madison, Wis.*

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